DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 346 002 SO 022 155

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TITLE Restoring Quality History Teaching and Civic Education in Brookline: The Educational Context for the Recent Parent Movement.
PUB DATE 9 Oct 91
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the U.S. Department of Education Conference on Improving the Teaching of History and Civic Education (Washington, DC, October 9, 1991).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Citizen Participation; *Civics; *Curriculum Development; Educational Research; High Schools; *History Instruction; Multicultural Education; *Parent Participation; *Social Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Brookline Public Schools MA

ABSTRACT

Brookline High School in the suburban Boston, Massachusetts area has been long recognized as having a reputation for academic excellence; its social studies department, for example, has been highly praised for the diverse range of courses it has offered. This paper recounts what happened to Brookline High school's social studies department in the 1980s when a series of events undermined the quality and integrity of the social studies curriculum. In the early 1980s, a number of educators at Brookline High began to take steps to revise the social studies curriculum. This revision, culminating in the elimination of the Advanced Placement European History course from the curriculum and done in the name of multiculturalism, in fact stemmed from an anti-Western orientation. The paper describes efforts made by a group of concerned citizens and parents to reinstate the A.P. European History course and to give a new direction to the social studies curriculum. (DB)

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The Parent Movement to Restore Quality History Teaching in the Brookline Public Schools: Context, Origins, and Accomplishments

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Paper presented at the
Conference on Improving the Teaching of History and Civic Education
U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C.
October 9, 1991

In 1983, Sarah Lawrence Lightfoot, an educational researcher at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, published an award-winning book entitled The Good High School: Portraits of Character and Culture. In an effort to define the qualities of a good high school, Lightfoot examined six high schools around the country with earned reputations for excellence. One of the six was Brookline High School, a semi-urban school in the Boston area attended largely by children of professionals and academics. Lightfoot visited the high school in the early 1980s, just after it had undergone its regular ten-year reaccreditation. She reported how impressed she was by the diverse courses offered in the social studies department, such as American History for Foreign Students, Black Studies, Afro-American History, World Culture, Women in Society, and Introduction to Criminal Justice. Lightfoot was not the first observer to be impressed by that array of courses.

SO 022 155

Ten years earlier, in 1973, members of a study group in the League of Women Voters of Brookline were also impressed when they examined educational alternatives at the high school. They remarked in the report they wrote that year that the social studies department was no

longer primarily a history department but included courses in political science, sociology, religion, economics, and psychology. Their report also noted that social and ethnic studies had entered the curriculum, that "the Western tradition no longer dominates," and that "Latin-American, Russian, and Asian studies attract large numbers of students." Although they felt that department members articulated a rather "utopian" philosophy, League members observed approvingly that "a lot of solid instruction" was going on in social studies courses.

Today, many parents and citizens in Brookline believe that the social studies curriculum at the high school may now offer a negative model for the country. But not because it went multicultural. As the above studies suggest, it went multicultural twenty years ago without controversy--or lack of academic rigor. It may offer a negative model today because of what has taken place in just the past decade in the name of multicultural education. And what has taken place has occurred primarily because our school committee abdicated its responsibility for curriculum policy-making to a few administrators and teachers.

Background

The present curriculum is the result of a revision that took place from 1982-1988 under the direction of the then chairperson of the social studies department. This revision led to a school committee vote in January, 1988 that eliminated Advanced Placement European History, beginning with the 1989-1990 academic year. Controversy broke out as soon as parents and students discovered in the spring of 1989 that this academically rigorous and highly popular course, which had been taught by James Dudley for 17 years, was not in the newly published high school catalogue for 1989-1990. At the end of the summer of 1989, the chairperson responsible for the curriculum revision abruptly went on leave and later left her position for a similar one in a neighboring school system. The efforts throughout the fall of 1989 by the assistant superintendent of curriculum, the acting social studies department chair, the principal of the high school, and members of the social studies faculty to prevent reinstatement of the course on the grounds that it was not compatible with their multicultural orientation triggered much more than the development of a parent organization to restore the course. It led a number of interested citizens and parents to explore the entire high school social studies curriculum out of concern for what was being offered to all the students, especially the lower-achieving students.

The sources of information they drew upon to analyze the current social studies curriculum were the minutes of school committee meetings, official school documents appended to them, descriptions of proposed new courses, videotapes of recent staff development workshops, available curriculum guides, course syllabi, required and recommended reading materials, and copies of mid-term and final exams and homework assignments. To obtain access to the curriculum materials, they were forced to seek rulings from the Massachusetts Secretary

of State and the Boston law firm retained by the Brookline School Committee. Their rulings indicated explicitly that all these materials were public information under the Freedom of Information Act. The school committee had no choice but to ask the social studies faculty to make all curriculum materials available to the inquiring parents. Although there are still many individual teachers teaching honest academic courses, it is clear to all those who have examined these materials that the social studies curriculum as a whole lacks academic integrity and reflects the anti-Western orientation of what many have called radical or ideological multiculturalism.

In the first section of this paper, we give some details about the current curriculum so that readers can better understand the educational context for James Dudley's reflections on his recent personal and professional experiences in the social studies department (Appendix A) and for the development, activities, and accomplishments of the parent organization that Ronni Gordon Stillman, her husband, and other parents began in an effort to restore this history course to the curriculum.

The Present Curriculum

The revision of the social studies curriculum began after the appointment in 1982 of a new chairperson for the social studies department. Four goals were outlined in a report to the school committee in June 1984: (1) All curricular areas must attend to social, religious, and cultural diversity; (2) Peace education should be integrated into the social studies program, not only to expand attention to nuclear issues but to provide limits and guidance for instruction; (3) A clear and appropriate sequence of topics should characterize the social studies program from kindergarten through twelfth grade; and (4) Special education and bilingual teachers will be part of the curriculum revision and influence its development.

The chart entitled Curriculum Changes Comparison in Figure I shows the changes in course sequence in the high school curriculum that implemented the third goal.

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Insert Figure 1 about here

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Note that the number of courses offered before and after is about the same; a number of electives for sophomores have simply been made available to seniors only. For the senior year in 1989-1990, A.P. European History is gone. Added are two new courses, an Advanced Placement Government and Comparative Politics course and a year-long senior seminar on AIDS that gives students credit for both one year of English and one year of social studies. It is clear from this official school document that the A.P. European History course was replaced by another A.P. course, not a non-Western history course, despite the later contention by some administrators and faculty members that A.P. European History had to be dropped in order to

offer students more non-Western history. What is chiefly different in this revised curriculum is the number and nature of the sophomore courses.

The 1989-1990 Grade 10 courses, one of which is now required for graduation, have a decided ethnic look. The only new course for grade 10, World in Crisis, also does. (It's worth remembering that this course and the senior seminar on AIDS were the two new courses whose development absorbed department energies during the 1980s.) World in Crisis focuses on three unrelated areas of conflict in the world: Northern Ireland, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East, and was designed in part to appeal to particular ethnic groups in Brookline. Ethnic balkanization of the students before they take U.S. history, one can infer, was part of the rationale for the re-arrangement of courses in Grades 10 and 12. Keep in mind that the students have had no civics course before their sophomore year. What cannot appear in this chart are the enrollment figures and the thrust of the courses. As of the 1991-1992 academic year, only 101 students take European history, and another 14 take Russian studies, the only real academic courses to judge by the content of their final exams. On the other hand, 63 students take African-American history, 20 take Asian studies, and 155 take World in Crisis, courses with a decidedly anti-Western orientation and generally low academic demands. Indeed, the school committee minutes indicate that World in Crisis was designed for lower achieving students, even though this is not stated in the high school catalogue. Overall, about two-thirds of Brookline High School students now prepare for U.S. History in their junior year with an anti-Western course in their sophomore year.

World in Crisis, which has many more sections than European history, has the clearest anti-Western thrust as well as the most limited academic objectives of all the sophomore courses. To judge by final exams, the unit on Southeast Asia focuses almost wholly on Vietnam, and on America's involvement in Vietnam--and this in 1991. The unit on the Middle East focuses only on Israel, with absolutely nothing on Iraq's history, Saddam Hussein, and the threat his armaments pose to the whole world. And this despite the fact that the course was supposedly redesigned in December 1990 to include an equal focus on the crisis in the Persian Gulf. By the time students finish this course, they have been implicitly encouraged to see all white Protestants, Americans, the British, other Europeans, and Israelis as oppressors of the poor or people of color, and to view Britain, America, and Israel, all democracies, as the major oppressor nations in the world.

Some of the homework assignments in this course clearly illustrate the limited nature of the academic demands on the students; they deliberately teach political strategies, not academic knowledge or critical thinking. For example, in the unit on Northern Ireland, students were asked to spend several weeks pretending they are Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland in 1968; their assignment was to gather necessary information and plan a protest march for civil rights.

Students had to work "collaboratively," both in-class and as homework, in meetings of their "cell," with grading based on the students' banners and posters, press releases, and a policy statement on whether to be violent. This kind of homework assignment clearly makes a mockery of collaborative learning and is an utter waste of academic learning time.

As another example of the anti-Western orientation of the current curriculum, racism is presented as an American and European phenomenon only. In the Afro-American history course, which deals in part with African history, students learn only about the trans-Atlantic slave trade and nothing about the slave trade conducted by African kings or Arab traders for centuries preceding and following the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In Asian studies, to judge from exams for this course, students focus on the failures of Western policy, to the extent that all twentieth century Japanese "aggression" is portrayed as a defensive response to Western "ethnocentrism." One semester exam for this course focused on Vietnam, and chiefly on America's involvement in Vietnam. One essay question unashamedly asked students "What would you do if you were drafted at 18 to fight in Central America?" The questions on Vietnam in Asian Studies are identical to those on the exams for World in Crisis, suggesting that the unit on Vietnam is a boiler-plate unit that is plugged into the curriculum wherever possible; in fact, some of the questions on Vietnam on the Asian studies and World in Crisis exams appear on U.S. History exams as well.

Needless to say, Brookline High School students are learning about colonialism and imperialism as Western phenomena only. Despite ample coverage of Asian history and cultures in several different courses, nowhere do students learn about the Chinese conquest of Tibet or Japanese imperialism as such, according to the formal outlines of these courses. Nor are they learning in any course about the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe or its recent break-up. Students also learn only about the failings of democracies or highly selected dictatorships. Despite the social studies department's professed concern to teach students about current conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere in the world--a thrust of the new curriculum--nowhere in the curriculum today are students learning about post-Sandinista Nicaragua, post-Pinochet Chile, the plight of the Kurds and Shiites in Iraq, Saddam Hussein's stockpiling of nuclear, chemical, and biological armaments, or any of the events taking place in Central or Eastern Europe in the past several years, to judge from course syllabi or questions on mid-term and final exams. Nor do they study the inter-ethnic conflicts in Yugoslavia, Canada (America's largest trading partner), or India today. The clear totalitarian nature of socialism, the failures of central planning, and the intense inter-ethnic hostilities in most multi-ethnic countries are apparently too difficult politically for the teachers to deal with.

Internal censorship of historical and contemporary realities was not the only dishonest strategy used in designing this curriculum. In addition to the anti-Western thrust of its skewed

content, another subtle technique used in designing this curriculum was to reduce exposure to Western civilization wherever possible. This shows up clearly in the U.S. History courses. According to all the outlines for U.S. history, students spend no more time learning about the early European explorations of this continent, the reasons for them, and the British settlements in America up to 1754 than they spend on studying the Incas, Aztecs, Toltecs, Mayas, and other Indian groups in North America--about 2-3 weeks for each group of topics. If we add a possible 2-3 days, if that, for discussion of World War I--the amount of time the outlines seem to suggest for that topic later in the semester--most Brookline High School students may spend no more than a total of three weeks of their entire high school experience on European history and on America's intellectual, economic, religious, and political origins.

Except for sophomore electives in European history and Russian studies, as well as units on Ancient Greece and Rome in the freshman course entitled Ancient Traditions, Europe both ancient and modern has totally disappeared from the high school curriculum. And it has not fared better in the K-8 elementary schools. As parents discovered in their examination of the elementary school social studies curriculum, except for a unit on family life in Moscow, a unit on the Holocaust, and units on Ancient Greece and Rome, the entire K-8 curriculum is also completely Europe-free.

Denigration of Western Political Values

A rhetorical ploy running through many mid-term or final exams is the systematic denigration of America's Western heritage. Numerous items on final exams in a variety of courses attest to the underlying ethos motivating this self-described multicultural curriculum. For example, students were asked to identify the following test item on a final exam for a ninth grade ancient history course: "Hellenic epic which established egotistical individualism as heroic." Obviously, the student must accept the teacher's built-in judgment of the Iliad or the Odyssey in order to get credit for the item--a form of academic blackmail. In this section, almost all the items on Ancient Greece and Rome called attention to negative features of these civilizations or were worded so that traditionally viewed positive features appeared with a negative connotation. In contrast, all items about ancient China (another unit of study in the course) were worded positively or drew attention only to ancient China's positive features, such as "Chinese belief in pacifism and relativism." Not a word, for example, about the existence of slavery in ancient China and the thousands of slaves who built, and died building, the Great Wall.

As another example, on a United States history final, as part of a section with multiple-choice items, the following item appeared. "A characteristic of the 13 English colonies was (a) complete religious freedom, (b) free high school education, (c) class distinctions, or (d) universal voting." This item has been so cleverly worded that the only right answer is (c),

class distinctions, a negative feature of the British colonies and a characteristic of almost all societies around the world at the time.

Interestingly enough, although Brookline students have, on the average, very high SAT scores, in three of the last four years less than two dozen students have taken the American History Achievement Test and their scores have been below the national average. On the other hand, the Brookline students taking the Advanced Placement U.S. History Test in the same period have had scores generally as high as they have always been, probably a reflection of the fact that the content of the course is externally controlled--through the Educational Testing Service.

Origins of the Parent Movement

When parents learned, in the spring of 1989, that A.P. European History had been dropped from the curriculum by a vote of the school committee in January 1988, Ronni Gordon Stillman went to see the Superintendent of Schools to request that the course be restored. He outlined a process for the concerned parents to follow. It seemed at that time as if it would be a simple matter. Four of the nine school committee members who had voted in the new curriculum prepared by the social studies department had apparently not realized that A.P. European History had been eliminated. Misleading language in the school committee course-change docket had implied that the social studies department was adding the A.P. Government and Comparative Politics course to the list of course offerings for seniors, not replacing A.P. European History with it.

At meetings with the headmaster of the high school and the acting chairperson of social studies, the parents were shocked to hear that the results of their curriculum revision process could admit of no modifications; Brookline was "on the cutting edge of curriculum reform," and this was "experimentation." They were told that A.P. European History "did not fit this new scope and sequence" and was incompatible with the new curriculum because the curriculum could no longer be "Eurocentric" due to changing demographics. They were told that the new curriculum was designed to include groups previously excluded. And this despite the fact that the 1973 report by the League of Women Voters of Brookline stated at that time that "social and ethnic histories have entered the curriculum and the Western tradition no longer dominates." Perhaps the most disturbing response the parents were given was that the goal of the new curriculum was to "deliver a unified set of values to the students." It took the parents about one year to realize that these "values" were not academic values but Brookline's own version of "political correctness."

Parents also learned from the headmaster that the so-called A.P. Government course that was to be the replacement for A.P. European History was just a one-semester course in American government to be followed by an internship in local politics. Surprised by this description, Ronni Gordon Stillman called the College Board and obtained a full description of its

A.P. Government course, a course that did not at all resemble the course that the social studies department was planning. It includes one semester of American government and politics and a second semester of comparative government and politics (Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union, China, and Mexico, India, or Nigeria). The parents unequivocally supported the addition of the A.P. American Goverment and Comparative Politics course to the list of senior electives, but not what the social studies department was planning.

The First Petition

In the fall of 1989, the parents initiated a petition requesting that the course be reinstated. Over 450 people, including 188 students signed their names to it. They also contacted former students of A.P. European History and their parents, as well as prominent educators in history and political science, such as Simon Schama and Stanley Hoffman of Harvard University, to write to Brookline's school administrators. Approximately fifty letters were sent, including letters from Schama and Hoffman, all testifying to the importance of the subject matter and to the impact that James Dudley and his A.P. European History course had had on the intellectual development of Brookline High School's graduates. Sheldon Glashow, a Nobel Prize winner in physics, stressed the importance of the course to his two children who had taken it. Governor Michael Dukakis called Dudley in support of the restoration of the course because two of his children were among his former students.

However, parents soon found out that their own elected school committee was as irrationally opposed to the course as were their school administrators. At a curriculum subcommittee meeting, the school committee member chairing the session received the parents' petition with contempt, tossing it onto the table. Parents, students, and Dudley himself had to beg for the opportunity to speak. The acting chairman of social studies called the parents' efforts "arrogant," "fraudulent," and "disingenuous" and introduced another theme in the controversy, the department's hostility to high-achieving students. The acting chairman stated, incorrectly, that the parents' concern was for only a tiny segment of the students taught by the social studies department. These ad hominen attacks became characteristic of the opposition to A.P. European History. The protesting parents were labeled "elitist," "bullies," "conservatives," "creationists," and "brownshirts."

On December 19, 1989, the school committee voted 6-3 against the reinstatement of A.P. European History. The assistant superintendent for curriculum defended the elimination of A.P. European History on the grounds that it was incompatible with a multicultural curriculum and stated that the parents' intervention in a curriculum matter was ill-advised because it discouraged teachers from "taking risks." As a bogus compromise, the school commitee offered students the option of taking A.P. European History as an independent study, an option that they

had always had. It was clear to the parents that their elected school committee seemed to be working against the interests of their own students.

The Founding of the Committee for Quality Education

Recognizing that they had presented largely irrefutable academic arguments for restoring A.P. European History and that they had followed the superintendent's process scrupulously, the parents realized that they had to organize to be more effective. Moreover, they realized that they needed to have more information about the academic quality of some of the other social studies courses the department offered. In their effort to restore the A.P. European History course to the curriculum, they had discovered problems with many aspects of the curriculum and, especially, with what was being offered to the lower achieving students. So, in January 1990, the Brookline Committee for Quality Education (CQE) was incorporated to work for greater accountability in the schools. They faced formidable obstacles in getting all the information they wanted, resorting frequently to Freedom of Information requests. In spite of Massachusetts laws, school administrators at first refused to make curriculum materials and course syllabi available to the public. Finally, after rulings from the Secretary of State and its own law firm, the school committee had to ask its administrators and faculty to make course syllabi and other curriculum materials available to the public, as required by law.

The press turned out to be a strong ally to the parents. Not only did the Brookline Citizen come out in favor of the restoration of A.P. European History, but it continued to print all developments in the controversy. Coverage in the press restored some openness to the school system and encouraged many other parents and other citizens to participate in the ongoing debate. Articles and letters about Brookline's school wars soon appeared in the Boston Herald, the Boston Globe, the Chicago Tribune, the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times, the Jerusalem Post, The New Republic, New York Magazine, Time Magazine, The Nation, and several professional journals. Members of the CQE discussed their issues on both public and commercial radio and TV.

The Second Petition

Much of the parents' efforts consisted of demanding that the school system abide by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. They discovered that Massachusetts law gives students and their parents the right to petition a school committee to institute a course not presently offered; the school committee must consider the course if thirty students and their parents request it. Since A.P. European History was no longer offered at Brookline High School, this law was appropriate to use, and some high school students went about collecting the necessary signatures, despite harassment by some members of the social studies department. The reaction of the administration and school committee to these students was disappointing; they claimed that since sophomore European History was already in the curriculum, the

students had no grounds to petition for A.P. European History. Parents now had to ask for a ruling from the legal office of the Massachusetts Department of Education. It ruled that sophomore European History and A.P. European History, like sophomore biology and A.P. biology, were different courses, thus affirming the students' right to petition for the course. The student petition was effective, and on December 18, 1990, the school committee restored A.P. European History, albeit with the following restriction:

"Students choosing freshman social studies courses are advised that they must take a course providing a non-European, non-American perspective if they plan to take both European History (Honors) in the sophomore year and European History AP in the senior year..."

According to this vote, students studying European history have to fulfill a requirement in non-Western studies, while students taking only non-Western courses do not have to take any European History. The social studies department has never explained why it was so concerned with insuring educational breadth for the students interested in A.P. European History (a group of about 30) but not for the other 1750 students at the high school. Moreover, the meaning of the oft-repeated phrase "non-European, non-American perspective" has never been clarified by the social studies department or the school administration. Nor has the concept of "multiculturalism," which has been used to justify the social studies curriculum revision of the 1980s, ever been adequately explained by the administration, the school committee or the social studies department. Like the term "diversity," many Brookline parents and citizens now believe that "multiculturalism" in the Brookline Schools is being used for ideological rather than academic purposes, that is, for dumbing down the curriculum for all students, for removing those courses offering challenging curricula, and for imposing a particular and narrow political point of view on all students without their or their parents' knowledge.

What the Parents' Group Accomplished

First and foremost, the parents' group have restored A.P. European History. Second, they are also responsible for the institution of the College Board A.P. Government and Comparative Politics course rather than the sham that was originally intended. This year 29 students are taking the former course, and 28 the latter course, a full 15% of the senior class. The parents hope that a more democratic process of admitting students into the A.P. courses will be instituted so that all those who wish to take these courses will be allowed, indeed encouraged, to do so. Moreover, they hope that the school committee will reinstitute paying for the students' fees to take the exams for these courses, as they once did.

Third, the parents' group has made education a major topic of discussion in Brookline, as is appropriate in a community which attracts many of its residents because of the reputation of its schools. Many parents are less hesitant than they used to be to question school officials about syllabi and programs that they think are of questionable academic value.

Fourth, there is now a process for curriculum inquiry that gives parents and citizens the right to all information about courses and curricula, and a curriculum development process that guarantees parent input at all stages of development.

Fifth, because of the parents' insistence on compliance with the law, course syllabi and reading lists are now available in Brookline public libraries, as they are in other Massachusetts communities.

Sixth, some of the hostility to highly motivated, high-achieving students that was documented in the 1973 study by the League of Women Voters of Brookline has begun to be eroded. There is greater acceptance of the need to offer them challenging courses.

Seventh, the parents pressed for, and obtained, a public hearing on the academic deficiencies of the sophomore course called World in Crisis, a course designed for lower achieving students but not advertized as such.

Eighth, the parents publicized two academically fraudulent consultants brought in by the administration for staff development. The school committee will no longer allow "academic" consultants like Peggy Means McIntosh, associate director of the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, whose three lectures, at $600 each, expressed hostility to white male children and whose ideas on race-specific and gender-specific thinking processes remain unsupported by any academic research.

Concluding Remarks

The coming years will be watershed years for the high school's social studies curriculum. It is a revised curriculum that is urgently in need of another major revision, a judgment that has been made not only by many parents but also by all five finalists for the position of social studies department chair just filled this past summer; none found its sequence of courses with their apparent content sensible or coherent. Most seemed to favor a two-year world history sequence, required of all students in grades 9 and 10, that covers all civilizations but especially the one whose intellectual history and political philosophy shaped this country's civic and political institutions. It is unlikely that the candidates were able to detect its anti-Western thrust in a cursory look at the curriculum. Nor did any of them note that Brookline High School's statement of philosophy recently prepared for the current ten-year reaccreditation omits the goal of citizenship, never mind responsible citizenship, as part of its philosophy. It is worth noting that the 1984 philosophy statement governing the social studies curriculum revision still included citizenship. In less than a decade, citizenship has disappeared from the philosophical rationale for our public high school.

The Brookline School Committee clearly bears the major responsibility for the academic deconstruction of the social studies curriculum. It escalated the conflict over the curriculum by not responding meaningfully to the parents' concerns. As a body, it refused to

discuss the questions they had raised about the curriculum, refused to sponsor public meetings on these questions, and implied that inquiry into, or criticism of, the content of the curriculum was tantamount to "censorship" or the "inquisition," not an expression of freedom of speech or parents' right to know what their children were learning. Nor was the school committee willing, despite constant requests from some parents, to hire outside independent academic historians as consultants to talk to the teachers and examine the whole curriculum in order to help school committee members evaluate the parents' concerns. Theirs was a massive failure of leadership. Moreover, to this day, not one member has explained publicly why a major curriculum revision with a multicultural orientation was necessary in the 1980s when the social studies curriculum already had such an orientation.

However, some hope for the future may be warranted. The school committee not only voted to restore A.P. European History, in the summer of 1991 it also appointed a department chair from outside the school system, uninvolved in the events of the past decade, who seems committed to restoring the academic quality of the social studies curriculum. The parents in the CQE hope they will be allowed to work with this new chairman of the social studies department to revoke the discriminatory restriction on students studying European history and to develop a curriculum in which all students study both Western and non-Western history. But much depends on the intellectual diversity and balance of the parent-teacher social studies curriculum committee that the school committee will authorize in 1993 to review the current curriculum and to make recommendations for the future. As the parents in the CQE have also discovered, much hinges upon who is selected for membership in curriculum committees or in search committees for high-level administrators and who controls their selection.

The parents in the CQE learned that committed parents can have a positive effect on their children's education. And the model they set for their own children is perhaps even more important than what they accomplish. The parents in the CQE were proud to see their children fighting for their right to a quality education, for themselves and for all other students. The students spoke up openly on behalf of their teacher, James Dudley, and, in fact, experienced the very best of participatory democracy. They used petitions, gave speeches before the school committee and other bodies, wrote letters to the newspapers, and studied some of the Massachusetts General Laws. Appendix B is a letter from 33 sophomore students to the Brookline Citizen expressing disillusionment and anger over the concellation of A.P. European History. Appendix C is the speech delivered by a high school junior to the school committee the night that A.P. European History was reinstated with restrictions. Appendix D is an excerpt from the valedictorian's address at the 1990 Brookline High School graduation in which he mentions the politicization of the classroom. For it was the students themselves who alerted

their parents to the non-academic motivations behind the attack on A.P. European History and its teacher. In the final analysis, they are the real heroes of this story.

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Appendix A.

Reflections by James Dudley:

the A.P. European History Teacher at Brookline High School

During much of the past two years, I've felt puzzled at the anger directed toward me by my colleagues, school committee members, administrators, and, sometimes, perfect strangers. The anger was not for my doing something I wasn't supposed to do, but rather for wanting to continue to do something the Brookline Schools have been paying me to do for the last seventeen years.--to teach A.P. European History. Because I protested and allied with students and parents over the elimination of that course, I became a figure of controversy: an underminer of "institutional integrity," a flaunter of "process," and yes, predictably "racist, anti-feminist, and homophobic."

A favorite modern philosopher of mine, Simone Weil, once wrote that "for the soul, it is the small things of life which are of the greatest importance." I quote knowing that much of my account will seem petty compared to the larger themes addressed in this conference. Much, too, of what I say will seem to be self-serving, an Apologia Pro Meum. But it can't be helped.

I came to Brookline High School twenty years ago. I was specifically hired to teach A.P. European History because no one else on the staff wanted to. As a former college instructor, I was prepared for differences at the high school level, but, nevertheless, the other courses I was assigned puzzled. "Philosophy East and West" and "Problems of Modern Europe" I could handle, though how much in a semester's time I didn't know. But what about "Utopia," and "Quest for Peace?" There were neither syllabi nor texts for these courses. Do what you want with them, I was encouraged; just don't bore the kids. Unknowingly, I had come into a very special social studies department, one of the first nationally where, under the press of the late 60s' angst and activism, the traditional curriculum had been deconstructed. Indeed, a detailed study of the department, done by the League of Women Voters of Brookline a year before I came, commented on the wide range of courses, and approvingly noted that the "Western tradition no longer dominates." Nor did anything else. In 1973, the department offered only two year-long courses; American History at three levels, and A.P. European History. The shadowing philosophical penumbra under which this multiple choice curriculum took place was the students' right to construct an education that was relevant to their own needs. Broad thoughts of relevancy, though, could not fill up classroom time. And so I taught the course historically, careful of facts, cautious of conclusions, and, above all, setting things in context. I kept my own counsel about what I was doing, but soon enough I became known as the guy who teaches history. In the early 1970s at Brookline High, it was the stuff of legends.

The next year, at my request, I was allowed to create a one-semester sophomore honors European History section. After five years of pleading, I was able to make it into a full year

course. These early years, however, weren't ones of mere struggle. From my first day of teaching, I discovered a deep bond with Brookline students. In ethnicity, religion, politics, and some other important distinctions, we were quite different yet well matched. At the core of this empathy, I think, was a trust of intentions. They knew I wanted to teach: I knew they wanted to learn. Everything else was irrelevant. There are few communities in America like Brookline, where educational levels are so high, and where appreciation of teaching is so genuine. I suppose I became spoiled by the parental praise and gratitude. Indeed, the dearest friends of my adulthood have come from the ranks of these parents.

The world, though, has a way of slithering into our personal Edens and bringing with it new definitions of sin. In this case it was a new department chairperson, a "curriculum developer" with decided views. Certainly, the curriculum needed "revision;" the passions that had deconstructed it long ago had run to sand, but the fractured, incoherent curriculum remained. Now, ominously, in the early 80s a new wave of ideology was gathering momentum and its source, as in the past, was on the left. Though this new curriculum coordinator praised my teaching, she was quite unhappy with my near monopoly of the brighter students. Our department had only one requirement, the state-mandated United States History course. Every student who came into my sophomore or senior courses in European History did so freely. Their choice was giving a deeper meaning to the old code word "relevancy." Certainly, I knew that despite my successes as a teacher my professional position was vulnerable in a department that had insisted on being out in front of the curve of every educational fad, methodological and ideological, and where a considerable fund of professional jealousy had accumulated. Still, I was shocked when in 1986, without warning or explanation, my sophomore honors European History sections were taken away from me. If it is not politic to kill a course directly, take a popular teacher from it and let it die through attrition. A year later, after considerable parental complaint, the courses were restored to me. More was to come.

To justify the return of a second social studies requirement, the department chair presented a revised curriculum. Though cosmeticized with some avant garde forms of relevancy, the revision was as fractured as what it replaced. Except in one regard. Cleverly hidden among the changes was the elimination of A.P. European History. Because I didn't know the school committee had voted blindly on the matter, its approval shocked me into silence. Once the news of the course deletion began to leak to the community, I began to hear from students and from parents. "Why?", they asked. The reasons offered were weak, armored in educationalese. "Multiculturalism" made no sense; Brookline had long had Asian, African-American, and Latin-American studies. "Eurocentrism" made even less sense since the majority of Brookline graduates had academic records immaculate of any stain of European History A.P.

When I joined with students and parents in publicly supporting the return of the course, my department greeted the development with anger. The cause of diversity, it seemed, set limits on dissent. In a wildly emotional department meeting the day after I addressed the school committee, I was raged against, shouted down, called despicable. History has more than lessons; it harbors consolations. In my mind I kept repeating Luther's statement at Worms. "I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe." As with the Reverend Martin, I never fell into the trap of acting the victim. I gave as good as I received. In the year-long battle, parents, friends, and, above all, students gave devoted support. Most important, we won; and if history tells that even the most deserved victory always exacts a price, experience tells that certain scars are badges of honor.

My historian teacher's soul, though, wants to draw some larger insights from these events. Here are a few that can be honestly worked out of the material.

(1) As long as History is not the primary focus of a social studies department, its survival is in danger. The Discipline's irreducible depth and complexity makes it stand as a judgment against dictated reforms that always insist traditional learning get out of the way of brave new innovation.

(2) When History comes under attack, teachers should make their alliance with the community. If that sounds "unprofessional," all the better. A teacher's first obligation is to his students, then to their parents, and only then to the school as an institution. Public education has suffered so much in the past twenty-five years because, in part, teachers have not been faithful to either what they know is worthy or what they know works.

(3) If as a teacher you follow the advice of (2), hold on tight. You're in for a rough ride. But despite the bouncing, work on updating your resume.

Brookline Citizen • April 5, 1990

Appendix B

Sophomores demand opportunity to study AP European history

To the Editor:

We, as sophomores in Mr. James Dudley's European History Honors class, are dismayed at the School Committee's decision to abolish Senior Advanced Placement European History at Brookline High School.

We are shocked and angered that the request of 150 students to reinstate AP European History was completely ignored. We have been granted nothing by the School Committee's "compromise", since the individual studies option has always existed.

Furthermore, no "tutoring session" is the same as a class with Mr. Dudley. His compelling manner of teaching, coupled with his high standards, provides a unique learning experience that no individual studies program could duplicate.

All of us sophomores deserve the right to decide whether to take Mr. Dudley's AP course in our senior year. The School Committee took that right away from us.

The School Committee appears uninterested in the welfare of students at Brookline High. Not once have we been given a reason for the elmination of the course except that it doesn't "fit the new scope and sequence" of the Social Studies Department. We beg the School Committee to review its decision and give Mr. Dudley back his course.

Mr. Dudley is a marvelous teacher who has opened our eyes to the wonders of history. His course is very rigorous and challenging. Mr. Dudley really respects us as students and as people. He has taught us not only history but he has given us confidence in our ability to learn. We have grown immensely in his class and know that we can tackle an intellectual task. He has been more than a terrific teacher - he is also our friend.

We have lost a lot of faith in the School Committee. By abolishing AP European History, the School Committee has done a terrible thing to one of the best teachers at Brookline High and to us students who will not be able to study with him again.

Signed by 33 Students

APPENDIX C. Speech to the Brookline School Committee-Dec. 18, 1990

-Junior at BHS, Editor-in-Chief of BHS Amaranth

First and foremost, we would like to thank Dr. Walsh for his efforts to restore the course. We appreciate the fact that you took us seriously, and you took time from your busy week to talk to us, the students, about how we felt about the restoration of the course.

However, the restriction included in your recommendation is unjust. Although our class is protected from this restriction, we feel that it is unfair to those students who come after us.

As with all survey courses followed by advanced electives, Sophomore European History Honor and Senior European History AP are two separate courses. The Honors course covers material from the first century AD to World War I. More than two thirds of the work centers on pre-nineteenth century Europe. The AP course starts in the fifteenth century and runs through 1980. Over one half of the material is on the twentieth century. The Honors course is excellent preparation for the Advanced Placement course but can in no way be considered comparable to it.

The main problem with the restriction is that it unfairly singles out students who are interested in history. This plan would forbid students from taking both Honors and Advanced Placement European History; there is no such rule in the Science Department to prevent students from taking both Honors and Advanced Placement Biology, Chemistry, or Physics. In fact the Honors course is the prerequisite for any AP science course. Why should future M.I.T. students be allowed to double-up and take two years of their favorite lab science, while

students with a love for history are not allowed to take courses in what interests them?

Likewise, the English Department does not restrict students from choosing what classes they can take. If allowing a student to take two years of European History is considered to be "Eurocentric", is it okay to allow English students to take the "Responding to Literature-Shakespeare-Nineteenth Century Fiction-British Literature" cycle in which all but perhaps two books read were written by British authors. Simillarly a Hampshire bound student can make his/her way into SWS and take three years of creative writing courses. With these options available for English students, is it really so wrong to allow students the academic freedom to take two years of European History?

An option for students who are not interested in taking more than the two years of required social studies at Brookline High is occupational education. Here a student can take up to four years of such subjects as Conservation Careers or Early Childhood Development. Some of these courses offered meet for as many as three whole blocks per day. Is it all right to allow students to amass six credits in one of these alternative electives, while forbidding others from obtaining a mere two in European History courses. We are clearly being discriminated against by the school system; our interests are just as important as any other student groups'.

Mr. Dudley's Sophomore course greatly influenced me. He sparked an interest in Art History and Comparative Religions, which I had never been introduced to previously in the school system. His one week intensive study of Pieter Brueghel, and frequent slide shows featuring great Renaissaince, Realist, and Impressionistic paintings really introduced me to art, for which I am now very grateful. His integration of religious thought into the cultural history of Europe was

C3

fascinating. In his examinatios of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Mr. Dudley stressed the vital formative of religious belief on cultural development. The role of the human spirit was understood as a dramatic and continuing force in historical development. European History Honor was the best class that I have taken at BHS.

It is wrong to isolate High School, without looking at the entire social studies curriculum in the Brookline Schools. In the elementary schools we spend years learning and relearning about the Hopis, the Aztecs, and (of course) Gilgamesh and the Sumerians. Nowhere are we taught about Europe, the continent which greatly influenced the society in which we all live in today. Is studying Europe for two out of thirteen years in the Brookline School System really too much time? It seems to be barely adequate in itself.

Finally, last year when AP European History was deleted, and the Directed Studies option was added, as a mere afterthought, the course catalogue suggested that all students interested in taking it for European History credit should have previous subject knowledge. How can you flip around one hundred and eighty degrees and now say that only students without previous knowledge of European History can take the Advanced Placement course. This is unacceptable and illogical.

We want to close by asking our teachers, school committee members, and parents to bring back this course, which means so much to us, without any restrictions for those students who come after us. We plead with you to grant us students, with a love of history, the base academic freedom which is undeniably given to those students with interests in other fields. Please return to us the power to choose our elective courses ourselves.

APPENDIX D. Excerpt from the Valedictorian's Address at the 1990 Graduation, Brookline High School

AND THERE IS THE DUTY TO OUR TEACHERS. EDUCATION IS NOT A BUILDING FULL OF TEXTBOOKS, IT IS THE FAMILY OF TEACHERS WHO HAVE GIVEN US KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS. LEAVING PERSONAL STRUGGLES AND FRUSTRATIONS AT HOME, YOU HAVE OFTEN BEEN BABY-SITTERS, POLICEMEN, DRUG COUNSELORS, OR JUST FRIENDS - BUT YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN THERE: FROM EIGHT TO THREE FOR TWELVE YEARS, AND OUR GRATITUDE WILL GROW WITH MATURE REFLECTION.

WE REMEMBER EVERY ONE OF OUR TEACHERS, AND WHETHER OUR MEMORIES ARE PLEASANT OR PAINFUL - THEIR INFLUENCE IS PERMANENT. WE MUST PLEDGE TODAY TO ALWAYS HONOR THEM IN OUR MEMORY. HOW SAD IT MUST BE FOR YOU TO SEE STUDENTS IN WHICH YOU HAVE INVESTED SO MUCH EFFORT WALK AWAY, NEVER TO RETURN. KNOW THAT THE SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE YOU HAVE IMPARTED TO US MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO STRIVE TOWARDS DISTANT GOALS. PLEASE SINCERELY TAKE OUR WARMEST THANKS

AND APPRECIATION.

BUT THE CLAIMS OF TEACHERS ARE STRIKINGLY CLEAR. OUR GRATITUDE DOES NOT BLIND US TO WHEN OPINIONS DOMINATE OVER KNOWLEDGE. WE RESENTED WHEN OUR CLASSROOMS WERE POLITICIZED. YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO INDOCTRINATE US INTO A UNIFIED SET OF VALUES. WE ARE FREE BORN INDIVIDUALS AND WILL NOT SIT EASY WHEN PUNISHED FOR EXPRESSING BELIEFS CONTRARY TO YOUR OWN. WE ARE NOT IN SCHOOL TO BE MOLDED INTO POLITICAL CLONES. WE CAN DEFINE OUR OWN VALUES AND BELIEFS IF PROVIDED WITH THE KNOWLEDGE TO MAKE REASONED DECISIONS. RECOGNIZE OUR INDEPENDENCE AS A COMPLIMENT, NOT AS INGRATITUDE. IF YOU EXPECT US TO RESPECT YOUR VALUES AND BELIEFS, ACCORD OURS THE SAME DECENT HEARING.

FIGURE 1. BROOKLINE HIGH SCHOOL: SOCIAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

CURRICULUM CHANGES
COMPARISON

1987-1988	1989-1990
GRADE 9 (ELECTIVE) Law, Individual & Society Introduction to Ancient Traditions World Cultures	**GRADE 9 (ELECTIVE)** (SAME)
GRADE 10, 11 OR 12 (ELECTIVE) FULL YEAR: European History African-American History Asian Studies SEMESTER: American Justice On Trial American Constitutional History Philosophy Women in Society Religions of the World Russian Studies Economics	**GRADE 10 (REQUIRED)** FULL YEAR: European History Asian Studies African-American History World in Crisis SEMESTER: Religions of World Russian Studies
GRADE 11 (REQUIRED) United States History: Standard United States History: Honor United States History: AP United States History: Transitional United States History: Legal Education United States History: Foreign Students	**GRADE 11 (REQUIRED)** (SAME)
GRADE 12 (ELECTIVES) FULL YEAR: AP European History Field Experience in Criminal Justice SEMESTER: American Since 1945 Directed Studies Current Issues	**GRADE 12 (ELECTIVES)** FULL YEAR: AP Government & Comparative Politics Senior Seminar (Interdisciplinary) Field Experience in Criminal Justice SEMESTER: America Since 1945 Economics Philosophy Women in Society Current Issues Directed Studies